

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN ORTHODOX DIALOGUE

Bucharest, Romania, October 29-31.1979, a follow-up of the dialogue held in March of 1977 in Lucerne, Switzerland.

Under the Sponsorship of
Patriarch Justinian of Romania
and Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen of Romania

The meeting was chaired jointly by
H.E. Metropolitan Damaskinos of Tranoupolis, [2] Director of the Orthodox
Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at Chambesy, Switzerland
and

Prof. Shemaryahu Talmon, Chairman of the Jewish Council for Inter-religious
Consultations in Israel, Professor of Bible, Institute of Jewish Studies and Dean of
the Faculty of Humanities, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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The papers presented during the sessions of the first day had been prepared
and presented by Prof. Michael Wyschogrod of the City University of New York
entitled "Tradition and Society in Judaism" and the Orthodox paper had been
prepared by Deacon Elie Jones Golitzin of the Institut Des Sciences Bibliques,
Faculte de Theologie; Suisse entitled "The role of the Bible in Orthodox
Tradition". [3]

Before the meeting began I had distributed a study about the Logos in the Old
Testament according to the Fathers of the Nine Orthodox Ecumenical Councils. [4]
The Jewish representatives reacted by pointing out that it was the first time
that they encountered Christians who could point out Who the Logos is in the
Old Testament and also asked permission to reproduce this little paper and
distribute it.

The two conference papers on "Bible and Tradition" had essentially such similar
positions which made it possible to terminate discussion early. In the light of this

I asked whether I may pose a question to the Jewish chairman in the light of the paper I had distributed before the meeting began. My question was, "Is the Angel of the Lord Who appeared to Moses in the burning bush a manifestation of God?" "Of course it is!" came the rapid answer.

I reacted with the following question, "Is He created or uncreated?" Then the reply shot back, "Of course uncreated! We Jews do not believe that God reveals Himself by means of creatures!"

I quickly retorted, "That is our Orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity".

Then the Jewish chairman reacted with, "then why all the philosophical terms like "one essence," " three hypostasies" and "homoousion"?

I replied that "These terms were reactions to heretics who had been transforming the Church's doctrine into philosophical systems, whereas," I continued, "the only purpose of such terms was to guarantee the cure of the center of the human personality by means of the purification of the heart, its illumination and the glorification of the whole person".

The Jews reacted with the information that this is the Hassidim tradition. Then I asked whether this is also that of the modern Hassidim. They answered that, "as far as we know it probably is".

But this is not only the tradition of the Hassidim. It was and has been the very foundation of prophethood and apostleship of both the Old and New Testaments and the ongoing life of the Church since Pentecost. The only way one becomes a member of the Body of Christ is by means of the purification of the heart completed by its illumination and glorification both in this life and the next.

I have been a member of WCC General Assemblies since Nairobi 1975 and of Central Committee since Vancouver 1983. I have heard a lot of Protestant claims of being moved by God's Holy Spirit. However, the only sign of being really

moved by the uncreated Holy Spirit of God is this purification and illumination of the heart and glorification which is the foundation of the Nine Ecumenical Councils sponsored by New Rome. This therapy cures fantasies among which religions are capable of being extremely dangerous. This is why the tradition of the Old and New Testaments and the Nine Ecumenical Councils sponsored by New Rome is not at all a religion. On the contrary this tradition is the cure of the sickness of Religion. [5]

Although the Jews at this meeting pointed out to us that our Orthodox tradition of the cure of the human personality by means of the purification and illumination of the heart and glorification was that of Old Testament Hasidim, this did not become part of the résumé of our discussions which follows.

"The center of discussion was the relation between Scripture and Tradition with a focus on the interpretation of Scripture in Tradition. It was found that both sides agree that the interpretation of Scripture was always inextricably bound to the text of Scripture since tradition is first and foremost the tradition of revelation. Furthermore, both sides stressed that Scripture and Tradition came into existence in a faithful community which preserves them but also, which interprets and applies them to its ongoing life, as the authority and source of its identity".

"The text of Scripture and its interpretation are both the result of or part of revelation at whose center is God's revelation to Moses on Mt Sinai.

"The Jewish tradition of the revelation of the written and oral Torah on Mt. Sinai was found to have a parallel in the Orthodox Christian tradition whereby God revealed on Sinai His uncreated Torah and thus inspired Moses to give His chosen people the created or written Torah".

"The centrality of God's revelation of Himself to Moses for Jewish and Orthodox Christian understandings of faith and spirituality became evident from the discussions".

"It was found that in spite of the well known differences in belief there are nevertheless areas of identity and similarity which would be worthwhile to explore in an ongoing dialogue".

"It was therefore decided that the subject of investigation for the next meeting would be the subject of the law in the spiritual and social life of the Jewish and Orthodox Christian tradition".

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FOOTNOTES

[1] A) Jewish Participants: 1. Rabbi Balfour Brickner, Union of American Hebrew Congregations; 2. Dr. Andre Chouraqui, Jewish Committee for Inter-religious Consultations of Israel; 3. Michael J. Klein, World Jewish Congress; 4. Dr. Moses Rosen, Chief Rabbi of Romania; 5. Rabbi Elie Sabetal, Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece; 6. Zachariah Shuster, American Jewish Committee; 7. Israel Singer, World Jewish Congress; 8. Prof. Shemaryahu Talmon, Jewish Committee for Inter-religious Consultations; 9. Prof. Michael Wyschogrod, Synagogue Council of America.

B) Orthodox Participants: Father Dumitru, Prof. of Old Testament at the Theological Institute of Sibiu, Romania; Bishop Anthony, Vicar of the Patriarchate of Romania, Bucharest; Father Cyril Argenti, Marseilles, France; Prof. Ion Bria, World Council of Churches; Deacon Emilian Conrutescu, Theological Institute of Bucharest; Metropolitan Damaskinos of Tranoupolis, Director of the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Chambesy, Switzerland; Deacon Elie Jones Golitzin, Institute des Sciences Bibliques, The Faculty of Theology, Lausanne, Switzerland; Deacon Vassilios Karayannis, Orthodox Center,

Chambesy, Geneva; Prof. John S. Romanides, University of Thessaloniki, Greece; Slavco Valcanov Slavov, The Theological Academy of Sofia, Bulgaria.

[2] Currently also Metropolitan of Switzerland.

[3] Papers evidently not originally programmed but read at this conference were as follows: "Tradition and the Bible in the Orthodox Church," by Rev. Cyril Argenti from Marseilles, France: "Le role des diverssses traditions dans la vie de l'Eglise Orhodoxe," by Rev. Dumitru, of the Theological Institute of Sibiu, Romania: "Peace and Justice in Biblical Tradition, " by Cand. theol. Slavco Valcanov Slavov: "Jewish Community in the Light of Jewish Tradition," by Israel Singer of the City University of New York and The World Jewish Congress.

[4] 1) Nicea 325, 2) Constantinople 381, 3) Ephesus 431, 4) Chalcedon 451, 5) Constantinople 553, 6) Constantinople 680, 7) Nicea 786/7, 8) Constantinople 879, 9) Constantinople 1341.

[5] See <http://www.romanity.org> (THE SICKNESS OF RELIGION AND ITS CURE)